

**PORTLAND/VANCOUVER I-5 TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE
PARTNERSHIP
BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the
May 22, 2003

WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

Prepared by:

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Reviewed by: Donald R. Wagner, WSDOT SW Region Regional Administrator

PURPOSE: To obtain the Commission's endorsement of the conceptual framework of the *Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Strategic Plan*.

ACTION/OUTCOME:

Formal endorsement by the Commission of the conceptual framework of the Strategic Plan as outline in the recommendations developed *Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Task Force*.

BACKGROUND:

The I-5 corridor is the most significant interstate freight highway and freight rail route on the West Coast, linking markets in Canada, the United States and Mexico. Washington and Oregon are each other's closest trading partners and I-5 is the primary truck and rail route for commodities between the two states. In January 2001 Washington Governor Locke and Oregon Governor Kitzhaber initiated the *Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership* (Partnership Study). This study examined the impact of congestion at the I-5 Columbia River highway and rail crossings. A key finding of the study is that congestion at the Columbia River crossings is not just a local Portland/Vancouver problem but also a Pacific Northwest problem that will also impact shipments from the Ports and industries in the Puget Sound area and agricultural shipments from Eastern Washington.

The purpose of the I-5 Partnership Study was to develop a multi-faceted strategic plan for the I-5 corridor in the Portland and Vancouver area. The study was directed by a 28 member bi-state task force appointed by Governor Locke and Governor Kitzhaber and was co-chaired by Commissioner Ed Barnes. The Governors Task Force included elected, business, neighborhood and community leaders.

Dean Lookingbill, Executive Director, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, gave a presentation to the Commission at their November 2002 meeting that summarized the Strategic Plan recommendations of the I-5 Partnership Study. The recommendations are a conceptual framework for a very comprehensive package of projects and proposed actions. The majority of the recommendations are based on an analysis of conceptual solutions. Environmental analysis and further action will be

needed to refine the recommendations before they can be adopted by Metropolitan Planning Organizations, local jurisdictions, or states. The recommendations include:

- Expanding capacity to three through-lanes in each direction on I-5, including southbound through Delta Park.
- Interchange improvements and additional auxiliary lanes where needed between SR500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland at Columbia Boulevard.
- An additional bridge or a replacement bridge over the Columbia River, with up to two additional lanes for merging plus two light rail tracks.
- A phased light rail loop in Clark County crossing the Columbia River in the vicinity of the I-5, paralleling SR500/4th Plain and re-crossing the Columbia River in the vicinity of I-205.
- Capacity improvements to the rail system that will improve freight and intercity passenger rail services.
- Bi-state coordination of land use and management of our transportation system to reduce demand on the freeway and to protect the corridor investments.
- Establish a Community Enhancement Fund for use in the impacted areas in the corridor.
- Involving communities along the corridor to ensure that the final project outcomes are equitable.
- Develop additional transportation demand and system strategies to encourage more efficient use of the transportation system.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this presentation today is to request formal endorsement by the Commission of the conceptual framework of the Strategic Plan recommendations. The Partnership Study recommendations have already received formal endorsements in Oregon from Multnomah County, Tri-Met, the Port of Portland, the City of Portland, Portland Metro, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Oregon Transportation Commission. The City of Vancouver, C-Tran, the Port of Vancouver and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council have endorsed the recommendations in Washington. As of this writing, the Clark County Board of Commissioners has not taken formal action on these recommendations.

By endorsing these recommendations the Commission would provide a policy statement in support of the highway, rail, transit, transportation demand management, land use and environmental justice projects. Work has already begun to implement two specific projects recommended in the study. In Oregon, ODOT is currently conducting the Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Engineering necessary to address the choke point on I-5 just south of the Interstate Bridge between Delta Park and Lombard Street where I-5 narrows from three to two lanes. In Washington, the New Law budget has included funds to widen I-5 in Vancouver to three lanes from Salmon Creek to I-205. A contract for construction of this project is expected to be awarded this June.

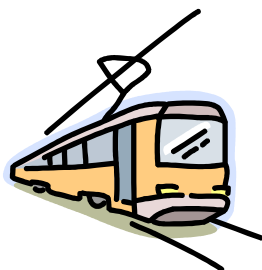
Before any of the more conceptual improvements recommended in the plan can be made, a formal environmental process must be conducted under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to identify the specific design of improvements and the impacts. The NEPA process is designed to ensure public participation in the decision-making process, an assessment of environmental and community impacts, and the exploration of issues of environmental justice. In addition, the details for many of the recommendations including the land use, transportation demand management, and environmental justice will need to be developed by the newly established Bi-State Coordination Committee before they can be adopted and implemented in MPO, local jurisdiction, or state transportation plans.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Washington Transportation Commission endorse the conceptual framework of the *Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Strategic Plan* Recommendations.

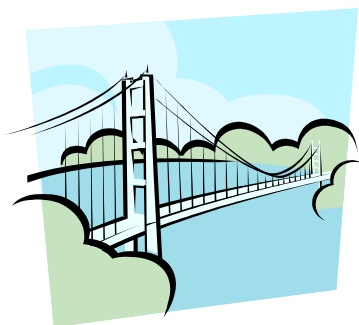
For further information, contact: Mike Clark, WSDOT SW Region Planning Manager (360) 905 2110.

Final Draft Recommendations at a Glance



Transit:

- A phased light rail loop in Clark County in the vicinity of the I-5, SR500/4th Plain and I-205 Corridors.
- Peak-hour, premium express bus service in the I-5 and I-205 Corridors to markets not well served by light rail.
- Increased transit service in the Corridor over the next 20 years called for in regional transportation plans.



Interstate 5:

- The I-5 freeway between the Fremont Bridge in Portland and the I-205 interchange in Vancouver will be a maximum of 3 through lanes in each direction. This includes widening I-5 to 3 lanes between:
- Delta Park and Lombard, and 99th St. to I-205 in Vancouver.
- Designate one of the 3 through lanes for use as a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane during the peak period, in the peak direction.
- Add a new supplemental or replacement bridge across the Columbia River with up to 2 additional lanes in each direction for vehicles, and 2 light rail tracks
- Improve interchanges between SR 500 and Columbia Blvd to address safety and capacity problems --, including making Columbia Blvd into a full interchange.
- In adding river crossing capacity and making interchange improvements every effort should be made to: 1) avoid displacements and encroachments, 2) minimize the highway footprint and 3) minimize the use of the freeway for local trips.



Additional Rail Capacity:

- Pursue the rail infrastructure improvements required to accommodate anticipated 20 year freight rail growth in the I-5 Corridor and frequent, efficient intercity passenger rail service.
- Establish a public/private Bi-State rail forum to advise regional decision makers about prioritizing, scheduling and funding of needed rail improvements.
- The rail forum and regional decision-makers should encourage funding for:
- Additional inter-city passenger rail service in the Pacific Northwest High Speed Rail Corridor
- High Speed Rail service in the Corridor; and
- The replacement of the existing "swing span" with a "lift span" located closer to the center of the river channel



Oregon

Land Use:

- Adoption and implementation of a Bi-State Coordination Accord to protect existing and new capacity and support economic development.
- Jurisdictions in the Corridor will develop and agree on a plan to manage land development to avoid adversely impacting I-5 or the Region's growth management plans.



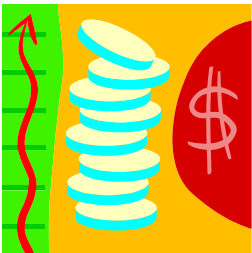
Transportation Demand and System Management:

- Commit to a comprehensive use of TDM/TSM strategies -- alternative modes, work-based strategies, policies and regulatory strategies, pricing and TSM strategies -- and pursue additional funding for transit and TDM/TSM strategies.
- Prepare an "I-5 TDM/TSM Corridor Plan" with guidance from the proposed "Bi-State Coordination Committee"
- Fund and implement additional TDM/TSM strategies now to encourage more efficient use of the transportation system.



Environmental Justice

- Map low-income and minority communities in the corridor
- Take list of potential impacts identified by environmental justice stakeholders into EIS for the Bridge and Bridge Influence Area as a starting point for more analysis.
- Work with affected communities to explore ways to offset impacts and/or bring benefits to the community.
- Develop a public outreach plan for EIS process that includes special outreach to low-income and minority communities.
- Form and coordinate two working groups for the EIS -- one for public involvement and one for environmental justice.



Finance

- OR, WA and the Portland/Vancouver region should develop a financing plan for transit and highway capital projects
- Tri-Met and C-Tran need to increase revenues for a significant expansion of transit service, starting within the next five years.
- Tri-Met and C-Tran efforts to increase transit operating revenue should be coordinated with the new Bi-State Coordinating Committee.
- The Bi-State Coordinating Committee should establish regional transit financing commitments that will allow for:
 - an aggressive bi-state TDM program and
 - an expansion of transit service to support the light rail loop.
- Seek funding to widen I-5 to 3 lanes: Delta Park to Lombard after environmental and design work is completed.

Next Steps/Implementation

- Fall 2002: RTC and Metro review and amend the Regional Transportation Plans to incorporate recommended I-5 corridor improvements.
- Delta Park to Lombard: widen I-5 to 3 lanes
 - Summer 2002-2004: Conduct environmental assessment and design work
 - Post 2004: Construction of Delta Park to Lombard
- 2003 – 2009: Environmental Impact Study on Bridge Influence Area (new supplemental or replacement bridge, interchange improvements between SR 500 and Columbia Blvd., including light rail between Expo Center and downtown Vancouver)
- 2010+: Construct improvements in Bridge Influence Area.